

The Islamic Council of Europe held a press conference on 19 October 1992 for journalists and other interested parties to meet the Mayor of Sarajevo, Muhammad Kresilovic. The meeting was addressed and chaired by Salem Azzam, Secretary General of the ICE.

The Mayor said that food convoys were regularly ambushed by Serbian and Croatian looters who often left nothing for the starving of Sarajevo and he called for aid agencies to re-route relief supplies via Ljubljana in Slovenia instead of through Zagreb or Split, in Croatia. He said that 90% of relief supplies were stolen and that the people of his city would die of starvation even if they survived the Serbian guns.

The Mayor was accompanied by his assistant, Vugdalic Sabahudin, a former goalkeeper of the Yugoslav football team, who would oversee the new Ljubljana-based relief operation into Sarajevo. He said his staff (2 full-timers and 2 volunteers) were identifying safe land routes into the Bosnian capital but if none were found he was willing to risk his life to get vital supplies through. He said that for 6 months there had been no fresh fruit or vegetables, the food being mostly powdered, and that people were dying all the time. The situation in hospitals was worse than at any time during this war and there were no medicines at all.

Planning to convey their message to as many European capitals as possible, both men said that the UN and EC response to the crisis was very disappointing. They had had great faith especially in the UN which had been very quick in recognising Bosnian independence, and for that reason, unlike the Serbs, they had not stockpiled arms. But, they said, it was not too late for the world to come to their aid and added that there was no reason for the West to be suspicious of help given by Islamic countries. It was natural for their co-religionists to feel for them, and other religious bodies were helping too, for example the Catholic charity CARITAS, and no one questioned their presence.

The Mayor said that the 6000-strong UN force could help to guard the food convoys from Serbian attack and Vugdalic called for the arms embargo to be lifted, saying that this restriction was ill-conceived and, far from saving lives, was causing thousands of Bosnian deaths.